

CD 2011--49



UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO
FACULTY OF MUSIC

2010-11 SEASON

Thursday, March 3, 2011
12:10 pm. Walter Hall

THURSDAYS AT NOON

Opera a Casa - Making Overtures

Opera overtures arranged for multiple pianos

PROGRAM

1. **Leonard Bernstein** Overture to *Candide*
arr. John Greer Che Anne Loewen and Mia Bach
2. **Carl Czerny** *Fantaisie brillante on themes from Mozart's*
"The Marriage of Figaro", Op. 493
Mia Bach
3. **Percy Grainger** *Fantasy on George Gershwin's "Porgy and Bess"*
Mia Bach and Andrea Grant
4. **Gioachino Rossini** Overture to *The Barber of Seville*
arr. Carl Czerny Andrea Grant, Steven Philcox and Che Anne Loewen

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Next on Thursdays at Noon

March 17, 2011

John Rudolph, percussion, Kathleen Rudolph, flute

Donald Erb: Drawing Down the Moon

Keiko Abe: Wind in the Bamboo Grove

Gareth Farr: Kembang Suling

Rhonda Larson: Movin' On

George Crumb: An Idyll for the Misbegotten



PROGRAM NOTES

Opera a Casa

Colleagues Mia Bach and Andrea Grant (with guests) have embarked on a musical and historical journey exploring music for piano(s) and piano with other instruments influenced by opera and operatic themes.

With the continuing evolution of the piano and the middle-class throughout the 1800's, operatic paraphrases and transcriptions for piano and piano with other instruments became enormously popular during that century. Opera was taken out of the theatre and brought onto the concert stage and, into the home as the rising middle-class desired a piece of the action. Operatic transcription continues to be a creative vehicle for current composers. Today we feature one such contemporary arrangement by composer John Greer.

Today's program includes music of North American, European and Australian composers and arrangers.

Dictionaries define overture as:

"a piece of music containing contrasting sections played at the beginning of an opera, often containing the main musical themes of the work"

"an act, offer, gesture or proposal that indicates readiness to undertake a course of action or open a relationship".

Our program highlights both definitions in many ways.

Our guest, pianist Che Anne Loewen and arranger John Greer have both been associated with the Faculty of Music for many years. Che has nurtured pianists and singers for decades in her work as collaborative pianist, and instructor for the Voice Studies program. Her friend and associate for many years, John Greer, was an opera school staff member, is well known internationally as composer, extraordinary pianist and arranger. Their love of vocal music and the piano opened a relationship many years ago that continues to this day. This program features Mr. Greer's arrangement of the *Overture to Candide*. Mr. Greer was kind enough to share with us his inspiration in creating this arrangement, and some of its performance history.

"When I was a high school student, my first exposure to Leonard Bernstein was a WSO concert at my school (Gordon Bell High School) which featured the overture to Candide. I was mesmerized and delighted and the piece remains a favourite of mine. (I finally had the delight of conducting it myself when we fully produced the whole operetta at the Eastman School of Music when I was music director of EOT there.) I soon discovered his Joy of Music series at my local library, which was very influential to my musical development. My connection with Bernstein continued in my senior year in high school where I was the rehearsal pianist for our production of West Side Story, and that experience was so profound and rewarding that it pointed the way to my future profession: voice and theater musician. I arranged the Candide overture as a youngster in university for my own edification. Laurie Duncan and I premiered the overture at the University of Manitoba. It has since been performed numerous times on both sides of the border, usually with myself as one of the pianists. Most recently, colleague Grant Wenaus and I performed it at NYU as part of a concert also featuring my Liebesleid Lieder for vocal quartet and piano, four-hands." -John Greer

Two of opera's most beloved characters, Figaro and the little nemesis Cherubino are featured in Czerny's spectacular *Fantasy brillante on themes from Mozart's "The Marriage of Figaro"*. Today, Czerny is mostly known for his pedagogical studies, which do not truly represent the quality of this prolific composer for the piano. The spirit of Mozart's music and characterization is superbly captured in Carl Czerny's virtuosic transcription – one of many that were written in the century after the opera's premiere. Czerny chooses to focus on themes representing Figaro and Cherubino (who is always quite eager to open a relationship with any female character). Czerny exploits the emotional extremes of each, presenting feminine and masculine sides of Mozart's thematic material. The musical and pianistic wit of Czerny is evident, and his imagination (mostly in C major!) seems inexhaustible.

The Australian-born multi-talented musician Percy Grainger contributed many effective transcriptions to the repertoire. Some rank easily with those of Liszt and Busoni. In this sparkling and captivating *Fantasy on George Gershwin's "Porgy and Bess"*, Grainger weaves the best tunes from the opera creating a highly charged, toe-tapping and brilliant piano work.

Rossini's overture to *The Barber of Seville* is probably one of the most well-known overtures in the entire concert repertoire. From the operatic to the concert stage and even woven into the brilliant cartoons of the world's best-loved cartoon rabbit Bugs Bunny, Rossini's overture bubbles with an energy and vitality that is both comic and inspired. Again we are entranced by Czerny's incomparable arranging skill, both musical and pianistic.

Opera a Casa is delighted to welcome new faculty member Steven Philcox in this spirited arrangement for six hands.

BIOGRAPHIES

A passionate advocate of music and music education, **MIA BACH**'s professional experience spans the spectrum of a professional pianist: junior to advanced piano pedagogy; concerto appearances with orchestras, debuting at age 16 with the Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra at the Eastman School of Music; recitalist; chamber musician; touring soloist; instrumental, choral, and vocal accompanying and coaching. A renowned and sought-after collaborative artist, Ms. Bach has performed with several of Canada's foremost choral conductors: Lydia Adams, John Tuttle, Robert Cooper and Doreen Rao. Ms. Bach has also appeared numerous times as the master class collaborative pianist for the University of Toronto's visiting artists: Elly Ameling, Gerald Finley, Marilyn Horne, Rudolph Jansen and Martin Isepp. Recitals with Metropolitan Opera bass Paul Plishka, Jamie Sommerville (principal horn, Boston Symphony), Monica Whicher, recordings with Russell Braun (Ukrainian Art Song Project) and teaching appointments at the Eastman School of Music's summer school count among the highlights of Ms. Bach's multi-faceted career.

ANDREA GRANT received her Honours Bachelor of Music in Piano Performance from Wilfrid Laurier University, and went on to complete a Master of Music degree in Collaborative Piano from the University of Western Ontario. At the University of Toronto, Andrea then received a Diploma in Operatic Performance. She is a full time member of the music staff of the University of Toronto's Opera Division, and a faculty member of the Banff Centre's Opera as Theatre program, in Banff, Alberta, Canada. She is also a member of the music staff for Wexford Festival Opera, in Wexford, Ireland. Andrea is active as a freelance collaborative pianist, and enjoys a variety of experiences encompassing recital, opera and musical theatre. She has been heard in recital on CBC, BBC, and RTE radio, most recently in a full length recital on CBC Radio 2 with Canadian soprano, Simone Osborne, from the Rideau Chapel in the National Gallery, in Ottawa. Andrea has been involved in the development and production of several new works with various North American

companies, including Tapestry New Opera Works, Queen of Puddings Music Theatre, Soundstreams Canada, Calgary Opera, and Opera Omaha. Andrea works regularly with Opera Atelier, Canada's baroque theatre company, and also plays regularly for Mirvish Productions, Toronto. She travelled last March to Hong Kong, to participate in the 2010 Hong Kong Arts Festival.

CHE ANNE LOEWEN, originally from Steinbach, Manitoba, is a collaborative pianist of breadth and authority. She has performed throughout Canada and in Europe with many singers and instrumentalists, including Jean Stilwell, Catherine Robbin, Gary Relyea, and Measha Brueggergosman. She has been heard many times over the CBC and has been praised in the press for her brilliant support, truly exquisite articulation and her subtlety and nuance. Most recently she has been touring in concert with soprano Lorna MacDonald and trumpeter Guy Few; Ms. Loewen and Mr. Few have collaborated on a recording of French repertoire entitled *Exposures*. Ms. Loewen studied piano performance with Garth and Marjorie Beckett at Wilfrid Laurier University, where she was a gold medal graduate. Her aptitude for accompanying led her to the University of Southern California for further study with Jean Barr and Brooks Smith. There she graduated with top awards. She continued her study in Austria at the Franz Schubert Institut and at the Banff Centre. Ms. Loewen has served on the boards of Queen of Puddings Music Theatre Co. and Consort Caritatis, and currently is a director on the board of the Aldeburgh Connection and sits on the Dean's Committee in the Faculty of Music at the University of Toronto. She has received the Arbor Award for her outstanding service to the University where she founded the Greta Kraus Scholarship and spearheaded the Lois Marshal Chair in Voice Studies. Ms. Loewen's first love is the art song repertoire, and she relishes her opportunities to pass this music on to her students at the University of Toronto where, as an Adjunct Associate Professor, she coaches singers and teaches Piano-Vocal Masterclasses and Lyric Diction. She has also been a guest instructor in Canada at the

Banff Centre's School of Fine Arts, the Elora Festival, Newfoundland's Memorial University, for the National Association of Teachers of Singing, and in Germany at the Musikakademie of the Prinzregententheater in Munich.

Pianist **STEVEN PHILCOX** has quickly established himself as one of Canada's finest collaborators and has performed with many renowned singers including Richard Margison, Isabel Bayrakdarian, Shannon Mercer, and Measha Brueggengosman. His performances consistently receive high praise and critical acclaim. His recital appearances have taken him to many of North America's greatest concert halls. Mr. Philcox is often heard on the recital stages of Toronto and continues to garner the reputation as one of this city's most expressive and colorful interpreters. He added a new role to his credits with his conducting debut in the Canadian Opera Company's production of Mozart's *Così fan tutte*. Following this successful debut, he was invited by the Governor General to conduct the National Arts Center Orchestra in a tribute to Richard Bradshaw at the Governor General Awards. Recently, Mr. Philcox made a return to the solo

repertoire in an appearance with the Okanagan Symphony. He recently finished his eleventh season as vocal coach, répétiteur, and assistant conductor with the COC. Increasingly recognized for his teaching, Mr. Philcox was invited to the Universities of Manitoba and Montreal for a series of recitals and masterclasses. He has also held teaching positions at the Banff Center's Twentieth Century Opera and Song Festival, the Chautauqua Summer Institute, the Aria International Summer Academy, the Center for Operatic Studies in Italy (COSI), and the Charlie Creek Vocal Workshop, and was the music director for the Highlands Opera Studio. This past summer, he joined the faculty of Opera on the Avalon where he headed the collaborative piano division with an emphasis on art song. He is currently Assistant Professor and Head of Collaborative Piano at the Faculty of Music at the University of Toronto. He will also continue a relationship with the Canadian Opera Company as a member of its music staff for the final production of the season. A graduate of the University of British Columbia, he subsequently went on to receive his Master of Music Degree in Vocal Accompanying from the Manhattan School of Music.